

DoD Web site offers single source for deployment info

By Sgt. 1st Class (Ret.) Phil Tegmeier

Department of Defense health officials are offering Army NCOs access to a Web site that helps NCOs better prepare their soldiers for deployments.

"Soldiers today are smarter than ever before," said Dr. Michael E. Kirkpatrick, director, Deployment Health Support, Department of Defense. "More than ever, they question the world around them and the decisions that affect them. If NCOs view this [questioning by soldiers] as an opportunity to share information, they can present facts to their soldiers that will better prepare everyone for deployments."

Kirkpatrick's office evolved from the one created in the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm to answer questions about Gulf War Syndrome. He said the DoD's senior leadership saw the need to become more proactive in informing soldiers about possible illnesses deploying forces might encounter. The question, though, was who would provide that information to junior soldiers.

"The aim is for NCOs to translate information from large population studies on illnesses and diseases to individual-level information that makes sense to the soldier," Kirkpatrick said.

One of the answers to providing that information to NCOs is through DoD's DeploymentLink. The site, <http://deploymentlink.osd.mil>, is the NCO's source for:

- Current news
- Gulf War illnesses
- Medical readiness
- Deployments
- Family member issues

"One of the primary concerns we have is to prevent situations where units fail to properly screen soldiers for health complications before deploying to forward areas," Kirkpatrick said. "Keeping tabs on soldiers is clearly NCO business. We wanted to do our part and make health information readily available to NCOs so that they can do their jobs well."

"The bottom line is that NCOs need to be advocates for health concerns, and individuals need to take responsibility to get treatment when necessary."

New tool helps ID scam artists preying on military

WASHINGTON (Army News Service) - Service members, Department of Defense civilians and their family members now have a tool to stop cons who prey on military personnel.

In a joint effort, DoD and the Federal Trade Commission created Military Sentinel, a Web site to be used to identify those who seek to steal identities and set up telemarketing scams, fake sweepstakes and get-rich-quick schemes.

"Members of the military, their families and civilian DoD employees face the same problems as other consumers," said Timothy Muris, the Federal Trade Commission chairman. "However, members of the military and DoD civilians have unique challenges: their extended work schedules; they're away from home for long periods; they relocate often and unexpectedly; and they may not have ready access to consumer-protection channels or consumer information."

Military Sentinel allows members of the U.S. Armed Forces to enter consumer complaints directly into a database that is immediately accessible by more than 500 law enforcement organizations throughout the United States, Canada and Australia. These law enforcement agencies use this complaint data to target cases for prosecution and other enforcement measures.

Installation commanders can use the site to make informed decisions when granting businesses access to their installation, Muris said. It will provide DoD with the means to gauge consumer-protection issues facing the military community, he added.

OMPF updates at the speed of the Internet

Active-duty soldiers can now access their official military personnel records online at <https://ompf.hoffman.army.mil/news.jsp>. The Web site allows soldiers to view their official records and submit updates electronically.

The new service is coordinated through Army Knowledge Online and requires the soldier's AKO user name and password for access. Clicking the direct link from the AKO Web site enables users to enter without having to reenter their user names and passwords.

Similarly, Army Reserve soldiers can view their records and submit updates electronically at the Army Reserve Personnel Command Web site, the My2xCitizen Portal, at <https://www.2xcitizen.usar.army.mil/portal/>.

Although most National Guard enlisted soldiers do not have their OMPFs in permanent records, the existing National Guard permanent records should be included at the OMPF Web site in 2003. Until their permanent records are filed at the OMPF Web site, National Guard soldiers must go to their local Military Personnel Office to review their records.